



Dear Nick and Jane,

Jesmond East Low Traffic Zone trial

As the end of the statutory consultation period on 10th September approaches, we're writing to thank you for your leadership so far on this issue and to ask you to continue the trial for the full 18-month period.

At the outset, the Council stated clear, public reasons for the trial:

- to reduce the amount of traffic travelling through residential neighbourhoods;
- to make those streets safer and more attractive places for the people who live there; and
- to tackle climate change, clean up the air we breathe and create a more liveable city.

Some people feel the introduction of the trial wasn't communicated as well as it might have been, but what's unarguable is that over the last six months you have gone above and beyond what is necessary in taking time to talk and listen to people, seeking additional information to bolster the evidence base, and acting quickly to make changes to the trial in response to early evidence on the ground.

We know you'll want to digest all the available data and consultation feedback over the coming weeks before making decisions, and we look forward to reading a full report on the first six months of the trial soon. But, in our view, the initial impact shows great promise:

- **thousands fewer vehicle journeys through residential streets:** thousands of vehicle journeys have been taken off East Jesmond's residential streets – over 2,500 off Osborne Avenue alone – reduction of around 80% on the pre-trial period¹;
- **no increase in boundary road traffic:** motor vehicle volumes on the A1058 Coast Road and the B1600 Osborne Road – the boundary roads to the LTN – remain at or below 2019 levels²;
- **air quality better than ever:** air quality at the Cradlewell monitoring station is the best it has been outside of the pandemic period since measurement began – nitrogen dioxide levels are 13% lower for the year to date than for the equivalent period in 2019³;
- **more active travel:** although more time is needed to monitor walking and cycling impacts properly, initial measurements suggest a notable increase in walking and cycling through East Jesmond⁴;
- **the whole neighbourhood accessible by every mode of transport:** vehicle access has been maintained to every single address in East Jesmond while the entire neighbourhood remains fully permeable to every other mode; and
- the scheme has the **support of the emergency services.**

As you know, low traffic zones are predicated on the people living in and around them changing their travel behaviour, taking fewer short local journeys by car and walking or cycling more; and are successful where the resulting reduction in these short local journeys takes sufficient local traffic away from the surrounding main roads to offset any increase caused by the diversion of longer-distance vehicle journeys. It seems clear that, in fact, many residents have already adapted to take advantage of the trial measures – which mean it is now safe and pleasant to walk and wheel through East Jesmond as well as, often, quicker than driving around it – and that the 'traffic evaporation' on which the success of LTZs relies has already substantially materialised. Given that no-one would expect measures predicated on shifting vehicle-centric travel habits built up over decades to realise their full

¹ NCC June 2023 interim monitoring report

² Data from TADU. Motor vehicle volumes on the A1058 coast road have not seen an increase, measured at Cradlewell adjacent to the Air Quality monitor and the old Cradlewell pub. The 2019 weekday daily volumes are 25,000 vehicles westbound while 2022 and 2023 levels are 24,000 vehicles. Eastbound, the 2019 weekday daily volumes are 26,000 vehicles while 2022 and 2023 levels are 20,000 vehicles. Motor vehicle volumes on Osborne Road (B1600) are equivalent to 2019 levels with weekday daily volumes measured as 5,800 (2019) 5,800 (2023) vehicles northbound and 5,400 (2019) 5,200 (2023) vehicles southbound between March and August.

³ Jan-August NO₂ levels from the Bureau Veritas AURN monitor (2019; 35.7ugm3) (2022; 31.4ugm3) (2023; 31.2ugm3)

⁴ NCC June 2023 interim monitoring report



potential within six months, this is very encouraging progress which shows early delivery against all three of the Council's stated objectives.

Nonetheless, we acknowledge the vocal opposition to the trial among a significant minority of residents. No policy has only 'winners', not everyone can immediately adapt, and some will decline to do so while the measures are on a trial basis. More broadly, measures affecting individuals' vehicle use are always controversial and even otherwise progressively minded people sometimes see any policy that lengthens, slows or restricts their or their customers' personal car journeys as illegitimate even where the policy achieves a greater public good. It's no coincidence that, nationally, controversy over LTNs is greatest where they are introduced in more affluent neighbourhoods or that it is principled and visionary Labour councils that are leading the way in promoting clean air, prioritising public transport and improving conditions for vulnerable road users – all issues that disproportionately affect poorer citizens whose voices are often not heard so readily.

The vitriolic and personal terms in which criticism has been levelled at you, at other councillors and at officers from some quarters is deeply disappointing and sits very awkwardly with the claim of critics to want to "unite the community". But we accept that others who cautiously support the trial would like to see further evidence of its benefits over a longer period and that more time is needed to understand and respond to criticisms of the scheme, including potentially considering further changes to the trial to mitigate any negative impacts.

Taking account of all of the above, **we urge you to commit to the East Jesmond trial for the full 18-month period to allow additional time for the impact of the trial to bed in, the evidence base to be consolidated, further engagement outside the strictures of the statutory consultation process to be undertaken, and complementary measures developed** with ward councillors, officers and the community. This includes, or could include:

- additional monitoring of air quality and vehicle/cycle movements to plug alleged gaps in data or address specific hotspots identified by respondents to the consultation;
- introduction of community-led walking and cycling buses to local schools, supporting children's active travel and helping families adapt;
- additional travel planning with schools in the area that are well-served by public transport and appear to account for a substantial share of morning peak vehicle movements on boundary roads, freeing up capacity;
- progressing work already under way on a scheme to improve traffic conditions at the A1058/B1600 junction;
- further developing proposals for a bus priority corridor on the Coast Road to demonstrate and secure the benefits for public transport users of improvements that are partly enabled by the LTN;
- developing further public realm improvements for example at Cradlewell and Manor House Road to support businesses, customer dwell time and active travel;
- commissioning a thorough independent survey by a reputable polling company of residents and businesses – as has been done in other LTNs nationally – to obtain balanced and representative evidence of local opinion;
- considering additional surveys of 'essential' vehicle users to validate or otherwise claims that, for example, care workers and mobility-impaired people are unfairly affected by the LTN; and
- collecting better data on impacts on local businesses including official data such as VAT returns, and potentially independent footfall counts.

SPACE for Jesmond and our members want to continue to work closely with you, ward councillors, officers and other constructive voices in the community to support the process and ensure that a decision on the future of the scheme can be made from the broadest base of evidence and consensus in a year's time.

With very best wishes,

SPACE for Jesmond